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Yes:	54%
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Can't Say:	0%

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NEW DESTINATIONS

Today, the world is at your fingertips; a mere click away. With new possibilities becoming clear, the decision to study abroad is no longer a distant reality. While Indians embrace the academic life at universities and colleges across the world, the knowledge and skill of the new Indian is revered and welcomed, globally. Also, Indian students today are ready to explore new destinations, going beyond traditional options like the US, UK and Australia.

>> CANADA

Canada, for instance, has witnessed an exponential growth of Indian students on its campuses. The reason why Indian students are opting for Canada is because of the relative ease of a post-degree work-permit leading to an eventual permanent residency. Importantly, such opportunity is not limited only to Masters and Doctoral degree achievers, but also to a large number of students who earn technical diplomas and certificates of one or two years' duration. Further, the Student Partners Programme and the Post Graduation Work Permit Programme attract an increasing number of Indian students and young scholars to Canada.

>> ITALY

Some countries within the European Union are emerging as the Mecca for Indian students. For instance, Italy has emerged as a popular destination with an encouraging number of programmes being taught in English. The focus areas include automotive design, fashion designing, brand and retail management, fashion marketing, advertising and communication. The innate aesthetic sense of design and symmetry that has created world famous brands and products like Ferrari, Lamborghini, Armani, Valentino, Versace, Prada, Roberto Cavalli, Bottega Veneta, Fiat, Vespa, Pirelli and countless others have established the country as a designer's haven. Institutions like Istituto Europeo di Design, Politecnico di Torino, Politecnico di Milano, Universita di Roma, Universita Cattolica and SDA Bocconi, with strict intake criteria, are reputed in the European Union and beyond.

Indian students are ready to explore new destinations, going beyond traditional options like the US, UK and Australia, says Shekhar Niyogi, education and career consultant

Key reasons contributing to Indian students' interest in Italy are ease of entry and subsequent options of staying on. Multiple-entry visas of one year validity are easily granted to students. Residence permit (permesso di soggiorno) is approved within six weeks of application, is renewable annually and allows seamless travel within the 25 Schengen states. It can be applied for immediately-upon-arrival, after establishing a place of residence and a valid health insurance policy, along with one's college admission letter and entry stamp on passport.

Due to the average age of the population in Italy increasing to the current level of 45 years, there is a dearth of skilled and young population, thus opening up employment opportunities for immigrants.

>> THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch education system is designed to encourage a diverse mix of nationalities. Of the 1,560 international study programmes and courses on offer in The Netherlands, many are taught in English, so Indian students find a good range of options. Netherlands has a rich cultural diversity and a large percentage of the Dutch population speaks English, facilitating easier integration of Indian students into the mainstream. The Netherlands was the first non-English-speaking country to offer university programmes taught in English.

Indian students vie for places in universities like the University of Rotterdam, Technical University Delft, University of Amsterdam, University of Maastricht and the University of The Hague. Many Indian students find it easy to study and subsequently find work in this country that is immigrant-friendly and where the lingua franca is primarily English. Economics, engineering, oceanography, dairy technology, agriculture, horticulture and management are popular subjects of study here.

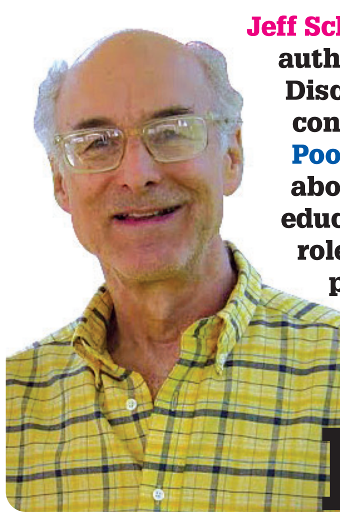
>> SWEDEN

Discerning Indian students rarely compromise on the quality of universities they aspire for and since Sweden sets very high academic standards, it has become an increasingly popular destination for Indian students. Five Swedish universities rank among the top universities in the world; University of Gothenburg, Lund University, Uppsala University, KTH Royal Institute of Technology and Stockholm University. The country fosters innovation and this is reflected in its success stories, which include Skype, Ericsson, Volvo, IKEA and H&M.

The Swedish education encourages individual research and study and many Swedish Masters degree programmes combine classroom study with industry practice, which gives Indian students a valuable advantage in the job market on completion of their respective academic curricula of study.

More than 600 Masters courses offered at Swedish universities are taught in English. Students from EU countries do not have to pay university fees in Sweden and enjoy free tuition. For Indians, tuition fees apply from the 2011-2012 academic year, but a good number of scholarships are available. The sciences, architecture, design, oceanography and marine sciences are popular disciplines of study and research. Also, Erasmus Mundus scholarships are offered to non-EU students, though in limited numbers.

STRAIGHTTALK



Jeff Schmidt is the author of the book Disciplined Minds. In a conversation with Poonam Jain he talks about how formal education plays a large role in birthing salaried professionals and not independent thinkers

DISCIPLINED! A dirty word?

You are a physicist. What motivated you write a book on "salaried professionals and the system that shapes their lives"?

Before I became a physicist, I got fed up with bootlickers at work — especially the well-educated ones, the salaried professionals. These people would never express an opinion that might displease the people above them in the workplace hierarchy, no matter what the issue. You could count on that. Later I realised that the bosses did count on that. They expected their professionals to be politically subordinate experts. Fortunately, on most jobs I found a tiny minority of independent thinkers. Then I went to physics graduate school and discovered that these intellectually timid individuals are deliberately produced.

I noticed that the best of my fellow students were getting kicked out of the programme. The system favoured self-centred students. Socially conscious students were at a disadvantage because their attention was divided and their concerns about "big picture" issues such as injustice drew attention to their deviant priorities. This put them at a disadvantage to please their faculty, relative to their unquestioning, gung-ho classmates. This motivated me to write Disciplined Minds, to show how you can survive professional training with your values intact.

Why has education become a high-stake game?

India is seeing unprecedented growth in the ranks of salaried professionals, meaning that formal education is playing a larger role in and more jobs are requiring employees to be mindful of powerful interests. Competition for professional jobs has intensified, and the opportunity for employment doing mental rather than manual labour, has made education a high-stakes game in India, even as people seek the credentials that corporate employers demand.

Education is playing a bigger role than ever in assigning people to their positions in hierarchical society, and the all-consuming quest for credentials threatens to twist the identity of anyone who enters it, profoundly changing who that person is. Thus, it is no surprise to hear complaints in India about professionals who give unquestioning service to the powerful corporations that employ them, and show little concern about anyone else. It turns out that these "knowledge workers" are selected precisely for their willingness to serve their bosses' political interests.

What's wrong with students seeking credentials that corporate employers demand?

The credentialing process is not politically neutral. That is because work is an inherently political activity and corporations want employees whom they can trust politically. So, if you are going to school to make yourself more valuable to the bosses, be aware that the process favours people who are willing to subordinate their own goals to the goals of employers.

Why do you say that work is inherently political and not just technical?

Work is political because it affects the distribution of power in society, and not only by enriching employers. The product of professional labour, for example, takes sides. The journalist's angle on a story, the accountant's bookkeeping decision, the lawyer's choice of contract language, the historian's depiction of events, the scientist's decision about what to research, the religious leader's statement, the teacher's lesson, the government expert's finding, even the speech writer's joke — professional work tilts one way or the other, and the way it tilts is never an accident. The professional is someone employers can trust to tilt in the right direction. Professionals maintain what I call "ideological discipline" in their work. Recognising the political nature of work allows you to understand why professional training is so abusive. Graduate school is a repressive intellectual boot camp that rewards conformity, because it attempts to break individuals into playing a politically subordinate role, to ready them for employment.

You say a lot of individuals who adopt corporate attitudes and values, sideline their commitment to work for a better world. Aren't most of us at a level of evolution that doesn't understand altruism in the first place?

No. Few people would be proud to say...

(Continued on page 4)

NEWSFLASH

SCHOOLING STEPS
A TIMES SCHOOL EXPO

It's that time of the year when parents are wondering about which school to enroll their children in. Schooling Steps, an initiative by Education Times, is an exposition of schools, conceptualised as a boon for such parents. It showcases an array of Bangalore's best educational institutions, ranging from pre-school to class 12.

In fact, going a step further, this exposition also has a line up of schools based in the US and UK, catering to parents who wish to give their children a global education.

Participating in the expo are Bangalore-based schools Greenwood High, Treamis World, Candor International, Achievers International Academy, Brigade School, Vibgyor High, Harvest International, Chrysalis High, Whitefield Global, Ebenezer International, Global Indian International, Vydehi School of Excellence, India International, Oakridge International and the UK/US-based EF International Academy.

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ADVENTURE

Shall we go?

"Attitude is more important than skills. Skills can be taught but not attitude. When hiring all I look for is the right attitude," says MD Ramaswami, co-founder, Polama.com, travel portal, to Poonam Jain

MD Ramaswamy

A tree, because it is still, grows roots which go deep. MD Ramaswami's youth was spent much the same way. After completing his BTech in chemical engineering at IIT Madras, he came right back home. "I wasn't too keen to go abroad. When my classmates were heading to MIT, UC Berkeley and Princeton, I came to Bangalore to live with my folks and joined a start-up (then) called Infosys," says Ramaswami. What followed was an illustrious career with many companies and in the year 2000, he became the managing director of Dell International Services. Incidentally, as it turned out, it was also the unhealthiest period in Ramaswami's life. "I was living the big corporate life right through the 90s; and at airport terminals every second week," he says.

When singing soprano in his career he decided to quit Dell. "Michael Dell was in Bangalore to give me an award for creating Dell International Services. At the time of leaving I realised I will have to get my own medical insurance. A couple of health check-ups later the medical reports deemed me the most unfit," he says. That'ss when he promised his family three adventurous holidays a year. "I travelled so much - Artic, Himalayas, Greece. That's when Polama ('shall we go' in Tamil) happened," he says.

'We check out before your check in', is the company's motto. He says: "We got started as a comparison-shopping portal for holiday packages. Dilip Panicker (my classmate and business partner) and I are avid travellers. We would often spend days, scouring the internet looking for information that would help us plan our trips. Given our technical and operational backgrounds, we decided to bring our expertise together to make holidaying."

Ramaswami also believes that entrepreneurship is all about being flexible. "Initially, we started with a focus on generating leads for travel companies, but that had to change. One trend that became apparent was that customers were looking for short holidays. Taking this cue, we changed its model and developed it into a specialised portal for short holidays. While the decision to take a short holiday may be on an impulse, customers are very discerning," he says. So the portal launched 'Pre-Checked Holidays' in July 2012; their writers visit, verify and rate the destinations.

Around three years before Dell, Ramaswami decided to do an executive MBA programme at Stanford University. "That was the time when I had transitioned from a predominantly operational role to one where I was responsible for an entire business. Lessons in entrepreneurship started here. You aren't going to believe this — I have never worked longer and harder in my entire life. I am in office six days a week and on the phone 24x7. James Bond slept with a gun under his pillow, I sleep with a cell phone," he beams.

What is the biggest challenge of this business? "Building a business for the Indian consumer, dealing with diverse expectations, understanding changing needs and continuously changing your product to satisfy your consumers," he says.

His advice to youngsters keen to launch a holiday company is to be humble enough to say 'I was wrong' and align with customer needs. Ramaswami emphasises that attitude is more important than skills. "Skills can be taught but not attitude. When hiring a new person, all I look for is the right attitude," he signs off.

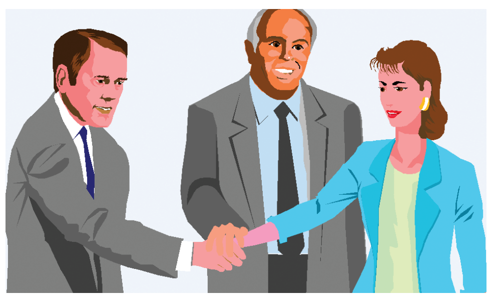
DISCIPLINED! A dirty word?

(Continued from page 1)

"My life's work is to maximise my employer's profit and power." People want their work to make the world a better place. They have to be beaten into submission. If you have a job, or if you are a student, then you are probably engaged in an ongoing struggle over how subordinate you will be. The workplace is a battleground for your very identity, as is school. The issue is: Who are you going to be? Are you going to pursue your own vision and stand for something, or are you going to be politically subordinate?

Working for someone else means subordinating one's own social vision. In this scenario, how can someone work for an organisation and still hold on to their values and moral integrity?

You can hold on to your values and moral integrity through activism that dares to critique the content of the work, not just the wages and working conditions. The bosses don't always get their way. By working with others and by understanding how schooling and work are inherently political activities, you can have the fun of thinking independently and surviving education and employment with your values intact. And, shaping the world according to your own vision.



(Jeff is a science and math educator in Washington, D.C. Write to him at jeffschmidt@alumni.uci.edu)

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SNAPSHOT

Palani Mohan's shot of Mongolia Eagle Hunter

FLIGHT OF THE EAGLES

Photographer Palani Mohan, armed with an old Russian jeep, a Kazakh driver and time on his hands, was determined to track down the last of Mongolia's Kazakh nomads who use golden eagles to hunt the corsac fox. He shares a picture story with Tirna Ray

Palani Mohan joined Sydney Morning Herald in Australia when he was 17 years old. From the first day of his job, he loved the idea that in order to click photographs one has to travel. That is how he developed a knack for zipping across the globe to discover the wildest and most interesting stories through a camera.

"As soon as I started travelling, I knew I had found my calling. I never imagined that someone would pay me to explore the world and do what I love," he says.

Today, a well-known photographer with a career span of over 20 years, Mohan's-works have been featured in publications such as National Geographic, Stern, Geo, The New York Times, Time and Newsweek. While he has published four photographic books, and is now working on his next book, Mongolia, how does he choose a country/location?

It's a combination of many things. "Often, of course, a client will call me up and send me to places. At other times, I just go and do it myself. A lot of the personal stories I do are projects I have been thinking about for many years," he says.

How did he come to know about the Kazakh nomads? Mohan first saw a story in a magazine about the eagle hunters when he was a child, living in Australia. "It's always stuck in my mind and I was delighted to have the opportunity to go there at last," he says.

The eagle hunters live in the far north-west side of Mongolia. So finding the nomads was not easy. Today, there are around only 70 of them. These hunters, Mohan explains, are constantly on the move, which is why it is all the more difficult to track them down.

"I had an old Russian jeep, a Kazakh driver and time on my hands. Mongolians are hospitable and welcoming of strangers. We would drive around and ask people where to find the eagle hunters. In course of our journey, with a bit of luck, we found them. Once you find the first family they tell you where the next one might be," he explains.

As to the hardships Mohan had to go through in the course of tracing the hunters, he recalls that during the start of winter, he was working in temperatures of -40 degrees. "The camera gear and batteries broke down. The cameras had a hard time and I felt that I was missing a lot of great images because my batteries were running at 10%," he says. But, why did he choose the winter months to shoot? "That's when the eagle hunters are on-the-job and that's when the fox has its thick winter coat. This makes it possible for the eagles to spot their reddish fur against the expanse of snow," he says.

Mohan spent three weeks with nine eagle hunters, sharing space with them in their basic stone houses. While he plans to go back to meet the eagle hunters again, later this year, Mohan says that other than the pure visual element of it, what keeps him going is meeting people and listening to the stories of their lives.

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Jayanagar: 174/40, Lucky Paradise, 4th Floor, 22nd Cross, 8th F Main Road, 3rd Block, Tel: 080-2244 7082, Mob: 99802 66721.
Rajajinagar: No. 12/69, 2nd Floor, 59th Cross, 4th Block, Opp. MEI Polytechnic, Tel: 080-2340 0390, Mob: 98454 81811.
Banashankari: No. 5, 3rd Floor, Above ING Vysya Bank (100 ft Ring Road), Kathriguppe Circle, Tel: 080-2669 9982, Mob: 96864 73004.
Shivajinagar: 23/1, 1st Floor, Hospital Road, Opp. Shivajinagar Bus Stand, Tel: 080-2286 3506/08, Mob: 98453 39311.
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